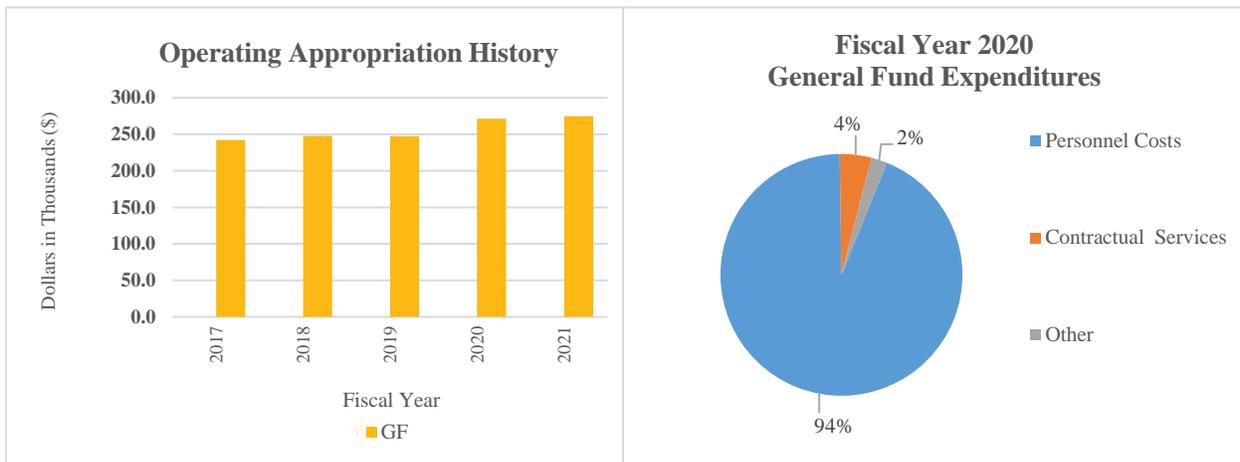


Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens



At a Glance

- In FY2020, the GACEC submitted over 1100 letters on legislation and regulations to elected officials and agencies on educational services and the service needs of individuals with exceptionalities.
- GACEC members and staff participated on over 70 boards, councils, task forces and committees.
- The GACEC provided information to over 46,000 individuals via presentations, press releases, newspaper articles, radio and television interviews, workshops, and co-sponsorship of conferences around the State, utilizing virtual formats.
- The GACEC updated the Delaware Disability Hub transition website, which received over 26,238 hits from September 2019 through September 2020, with over 13,276 unique visitors.
- The GACEC acted in an advisory capacity to the Department of Education and the Department of Correction, monitoring the provision of services in the prison education program.



Overview

The mission of the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) is to serve as the review board for policies, procedures and practices related to the delivery of services for all residents with exceptionalities or disabilities in Delaware from birth to death. The GACEC also serves as the state advisory panel for agencies providing educational services and programs to children (birth through age 26) in Delaware through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its amendments. The primary function of the GACEC is to advise and advocate as necessary in order to achieve its mission. The GACEC served as the State's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children

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beginning in 1972 and was later renamed the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens to encompass the expansion of its role in Delaware. The passage of Senate Bill No. 20 in 2015 increased the role of the GACEC to include acting in an advisory capacity with the Department of Education and the Department of Correction on the provision of services to inmates with disabilities in the joint agency prison education system.

In Fiscal Year 2020, the GACEC worked to establish goals and activities to promote comprehensive, high quality, family-focused services and programs for children and adults with disabilities in Delaware at its annual Fall Planning Retreat. Council members received information and discussed early childhood inclusion, the multi-tiered system of supports and target setting for special education standards with representatives of the Exceptional Children Resources work group of the Department of Education. Representatives from each of the three Delaware counties provided information on how their district is responding to education and COVID-19.

The GACEC continues to play a crucial role as a key stakeholder group with the Department of Education and participates with the Special Education Strategic Plan workgroup as they move forward with strategies to improve outcomes for students with exceptionalities.

The pandemic decreased legislative activity this year but the GACEC still commented on legislation affecting the overall development, education and general welfare of children and adults with disabilities. Council supported and provided commentary on Senate Bill No. 177, which struck language requiring the Department of Motor Vehicles to suspend the license of any student expelled from school as well as House Bill No. 175, which allows any qualified voter to vote by mail in primary, general and special federal elections. Even though legislative activity decreased this year, the number of regulations reviewed remained constant. Council provided commentary on 39 proposed regulations.

The GACEC collaborated with other agencies, councils, work groups, boards and committees to educate the disability community and the public on disability issues at various meetings, workshops and conferences such as the annual LIFE Conference, Transition Conference and Special Education Strategic Planning workgroup meetings. Council members participated on over 70 taskforces and workgroups to research and improve services for students with special needs and other individuals with disabilities.

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The GACEC actively promoted the DelAWARE DisABILITY Hub transition website with presentations and the provision of materials throughout the State at various venues and meetings. These efforts are made possible partially with the aid of technical or financial support from the Department of Technology and Information (DTI), DOE, Department of Labor (DOL), DHSS, Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), Division of Services for Children, Youth and their Families (DSCYF) and the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA). DTI also updated the transition website with many new features to make it more user friendly and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant.

Council continues to promote Disability History and Awareness Month in October as established by House Bill 123, passed by the 146th General Assembly. House Bill 100 also passed to increase disability history and awareness in early childhood settings. In 2019, the GACEC received hundreds of entries in the annual poster contest. First, second and third place winners were selected from the elementary, middle, high school and computer generated art categories. The winners were treated to a luncheon at the Duncan Center with dignitaries from the Department of Education, City of Dover and office of Lt. Governor Hall-Long.

On the Web

For more information, visit gacec.delaware.gov.

Performance Measures

IPU	Performance Measure Name	Fiscal Year 2020 Actual	Fiscal Year 2021 Budget	Fiscal Year 2022 Governor's Recommended
77-01-01	<i>Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens</i>			
	# of letters on legislation and regulations written to elected officials and agencies	1160	2400	2400
	# of boards, councils and committees with participation by GACEC staff and members	70	75	75
	# of individuals reached via GACEC presentations, co-sponsorship of conferences, press releases and workshops by members and staff	46,000	46,000	47000